

Message Text

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ACTION CU-05

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FROM AMBASSADOR JONES

PARIS FOR UNESCO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL
SUBJ: FYI ALERT -- COMMUNICATION ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

REF: STATE 037851

1. SINCE I HAVE CONSIDERABLE BACKGROUND IN THE MASS MEDIA ISSUE,
I WOULD LIKE TO RESPOND TO THE REFTEL.

2. MY IMPRESSIONS ARE THAT THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES ARE GOING
TO BE VERY TOUGH INDEED ON THE MASS MEDIA ISSUE AT THE UNESCO
GENERAL CONFERENCE THIS FALL. THEIR CONCERNS ARE DEEP AND
THEIR MISUNDERSTANDINGS CONSIDERABLE. IT IS ALSO MY IMPRESSION
THAT AMERICAN MASS MEDIA IS NOW ADOPTING A MORE RESPONSIBLE
AND LESS EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CONCERNS OF THE THIRD WORLD
COUNTRIES AND IT IS NOT TOO LATE FOR A REAL RAPPROCHEMENT,
ALTHOUGH THIS WILL CERTAINLY BE DIFFICULT. THE CONSEQUENCES
OF AN ALL OUT BATTLE BETWEEN OUR MEDIA AND THE THIRD WORLD
NATIONS WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN A LOSS BY US OF IMPORTANT
SOURCES OF INFORMATION AS A RESULT OF CLOSING OFF LARGE
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PORTIONS OF THE WORLD TO ACCESS BY OUR MEDIA. I WOULD
ENVISAGE A MORE HOSTILE CLIMATE TO WESTERN NEWS SOURCES EVEN
IF AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE CAN BE REACHED AT THE UNESCO
1978 GENERAL CONFERENCE.

3. MY RECOMMENDATIONS ARE TWOFOLD:

1. WE HAVE TENDED TO FOCUS ON WHAT THE US MEDIA CAN DO TO HELP THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IMPROVE THEIR MEDIA CAPABILITIES. THIS IS CERTAINLY USEFUL BUT I DO NOT THINK IT WILL SATISFY THE STRONG FEELINGS THAT ARE HELD AGAINST WESTERN MEDIA. WHAT IS EQUALLY NEEDED, I THINK, IS THAT THE U.S. MEDIA BE ENCOURAGED TO DEVELOP BETTER TRAINING AND UNDERSTANDING BY THEIR OWN CORRESPONDENTS AND A WILLINGNESS OF THE HOME OFFICES TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBLE, UNSENSATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE CONCERNING THE NON-WESTERN WORLD. OFTENTIMES IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THEY FILE INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE STORIES ONLY TO HAVE THEM CUT TO EMPHASIZE THE MORE SENSATIONAL ASPECTS. AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE IS STORIES ABOUT HAITI WHICH STILL TEND TO STRESS ONLY THE UNSAVORY ASPECTS OF HAITIAN PROBLEMS AND WHICH RARELY IF EVER REFER TO THE HEAD OF STATE BY HIS OFFICIAL TITLE. THE CONTINUED USE OF NICKNAMES FOR A HEAD OF STATE CAN HARDLY BE PRODUCTIVE IN FOSTERING A WELCOMING ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WESTERN MEDIA, REGARDLESS OF THE CONTENT OF THE STORY. THEREFORE, IT WOULD BE WELL FOR US TO ENCOURAGE A MORE RESPONSIBLE REPORTING POSTURE BY OUR OWN MEDIA WITH, PERHAPS SENSITIVITY TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR OUR OWN JOURNALISTS. IN OTHER WORDS, TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS ARE INDEED VALUABLE, BUT THEY WILL WAY THAT TIT FOR TAT IS NECESSARY. SOME SORT OF VOLUNTARY DECLARATION OF PRINCIPALS IN REPORTING CONDUCT AND STYLE WOULD CERTAINLY SHOW GOODWILL ON THE PART OF US MEDIA AND WOULD, I THINK, INDICATE A WILLING-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NESS TO TAKE THE CONCERNS OF THE FOREIGN COUNTRIES SERIOUSLY.

2. I DO FEEL WE SHOULD OFFER MORE TRAINING AND ORIENTATION PROGRAMS FOR FOREIGN MEDIA. THESE SHOULD STRESS DIRECT CONTACTS WITH US MEDIA AT A HIGH LEVEL. FOR IT IS A TWO-WAY STREET, THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF US JOURNALISM SHOULD BE DIRECTLY EXPOSED TO FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA AND THE FOREIGNERS WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE MUCH TO GAIN BY BETTER UNDERSTANDING HOW OUR MEDIA FUNCTIONS. THEREFORE, TRAINING PROGRAMS SHOULD BE CENTERED AROUND DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE WORKING MEDIA AND NOT FOCUSED ON UNIVERSITIES OR ACADEMIC APPROACHES TO THE PRESS.

4. MY INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT CONTINUES AND I WOULD HOPE TO BE ABLE, FROM TIME TO TIME TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THINGS TO OUR SATISFACTION.
JONES

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